

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Cook County Criminal Court Building

and/or common Board of Health Building

**2. Location**

street & number 54 West Hubbard Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Chicago \_\_\_ vicinity of

state Illinois code 012 county Cook code 031

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> museum</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> park</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> private residence</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> religious</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> scientific</span>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> transportation</span>
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> other:</span>

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Chicago

street & number Real Estate Division 320 North Clark Street Room 505

city, town Chicago \_\_\_ vicinity of state Illinois 60610

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Recorder of Deeds

street & number 120 North Clark Street

city, town Chicago state Illinois

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

1) Illinois Historic Structures Survey - Near North  
 title 2) Historic American Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
 date 1972 1)   
1964 2)  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Illinois Department of Conservation  
Library of Congress

city, town Springfield state Illinois  
Washington D.C.

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### Summary

The Criminal Court Building is a six story Romanesque Revival structure with excellent integrity. Located in an area of loft and low scale commercial buildings just north of the Chicago River, it is an imposing landmark in the area.

#### Explanation

The six story structure measures approximately 205 feet wide on Hubbard Street and 75 feet on Dearborn Street. The structure is faced in rusticated Bedford limestone. According to an 1893 description, the first two floors are blue stone, and the upper stories are buff. The entire building now appears gray.

The exterior is divided vertically in three sections. The basement and first floor have rectangular window openings surmounted by a stone string course. The middle section consists of three stories: the second floor windows are topped with segmental arches; the third floor windows have flat lintels; and the fourth floor windows are arcaded with semicircular keystone arches. A second simple string course separates the middle from the top section, which consists of the fifth through sixth stories and cornice. The fifth floor windows are narrow vertical flat-topped sash with transoms above, separated by a stone lintel. The sixth floor has arcaded windows in pairs separated by simple columns. Narrow tourelles define the corners of this section. The entire building is topped with a simple dentilled cornice.

The center three window bays of the structure, above the arched entry, comprise a slightly projecting seven story pavilion. Separating the middle from the top sections of the pavilion is a decorative open balustrade of circular openings resting on dentils. Tourelles define the sides of the top section. The cornice of this pavilion has circular openings and is surmounted by a semicircular terra cotta ornament above the parapet wall. The window bays on the entire Hubbard Street facade are grouped in a 3-4-3-4-3 pattern with the end bays doubled in the top section of the building to create narrower openings, and four window bays in the top three stories of the pavilion.

The entry is one of the most distinguished elements of the building. The semi-circular arch rests on groups of four columns with foliated capitals. Foliated carved stone ornament is also used above the impost and in a narrow band along the intrados. The extrados contains carved stone figures representing law and justice. Revolving doors were added.

A cornerstone on Dearborn Street at the corner of Hubbard Street reads:

North Market Hall, 1851

Criminal Court Building, 1872

Taken Down and Rebuilt, 1892.

The Dearborn Street and west (alley) facades are divided vertically following the pattern of the Hubbard Street facade with evenly spaced window bays. Originally, the building was attached to a jail to the north by a second story walkway. The demolition of this jail and walkway in 1936 is the only major exterior alteration.

The only significant interior space is the lobby. Immediately facing the door is a staircase with ornamental iron balusters, leading to a large first floor lobby space or hall. The floor of this area is white marble mosaic. Doors into adjoining rooms are trimmed in oak with small carved acanthus leaves on the corners. The interior was slightly modified

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet 1

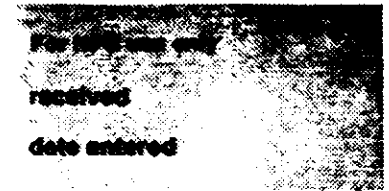
Item number 7

Page 1

in the 1930s by the WPA for use as municipal offices. The plan remains basically the same as shown in an 1893 sketch (attached). Courtroom spaces exist, although all court related fixtures have been removed. Traces of original trim and hardware remain throughout the building, all of which are simple and mass produced.

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 8

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Other trials that took place here have taken on local legendary stature, such as the trial of "Terrible Tommy" O'Connor, sentenced to death in 1921 for killing a police detective. He escaped from the jail behind the Court Building four days before his execution, and although he was never captured, the County reputedly kept gallows in the building for years in case he was found. The press room in the building was combined with the press room in City Hall as the setting for Ben Hecht's 1928 Broadway play and subsequent movie "The Front Page".

In 1929, the Criminal Court moved to 2600 South California, its current location. Soon after, the Works Progress Administration remodelled the structure for office use, and the jail, attached by a second floor walkway, was demolished. The building served as headquarters for the Chicago Board of Health from 1939 until 1966, and since has been used by a variety of City agencies. It is presently vacant in anticipation of sale by the City.

2. Architectural Significance

Otto Matz was born in Germany in 1839 and received his architectural training at Berlin Polytechnic. He emigrated directly to Chicago in 1852 where he joined the Illinois Central Railroad (IC) Engineer Corps and later became architect for the railroad. In 1854, he designed the "Great Central Station" at the foot of South Water Street, a masonry structure with arched openings and vaulted sneds which was the IC's first passenger terminal. As architect for the IC, Matz designed a number of stations, freight houses and a round house. In 1857, he opened his own office. His work in Chicago included residences, commercial blocks and schools, and he was architect of the Kankakee and Bourbonnais courthouses.

Matz left Chicago from 1861 to 1864 to serve as assistant engineer in the U.S. Army. In 1868, he was appointed architect for the Chicago Schools. He is known as the architect of the Nixon Building (demolished), constructed at the northeast corner of LaSalle and Monroe streets. Almost complete when the Fire struck in 1871, this five story commercial block was one of the only survivors of the Fire, due to its innovative use of terra cotta fireproofing.

After the Fire, Matz won the competition for the City Hall and County Building. He was awarded \$5,000, but due to political haggling, his design was never constructed. Other known buildings by Matz were the Alexan Beothers Hospital, the Chicago Hospital for Women (both demolished), and portions of the Schoenhofen Brewery complex (National Register 1978, demolished 1984).

Building type. An 1893 account described the new Court Building as follows:

Architecturally the main features of this citadel of justice are largely Romanesque, although a prevailing tone of business efficiency is observed to the exclusion of pronounced markings of the school recognized.

Romanesque elements including the arched entry, corner tourelles, arcaded windows

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and rusticated stone facing place the building in the tradition of Richardsonian Romanesque courthouses. This style dominated courthouse construction in the late nineteenth century after Richardson's triumphant Allegheny County Courthouse was constructed in Pittsburgh in 1885.<sup>10</sup>

Lacking a prominent tower and the castle-like massing of more exuberant courthouses, Matz's structure adapted elements of the Romanesque to its more restrained environment, while succeeding in creating a structure of imposing monumentality. Undoubtedly, the design was influenced by commercial uses of the style in Chicago including H. H. Richardson's own Marshall Field Wholesale Store (1885-87); Adler & Sullivan's Auditorium (1889); Speyer's Donohue Building in Printing House Row (1883); Burnham & Root's Rookery (1885-86). Similar buildings were constructed across the country during this period, but in Chicago the Romanesque style is under represented in commercial architecture, due largely to the development of and preference for the Chicago School of Architecture. The Court Building is one of the few of this style which survives.

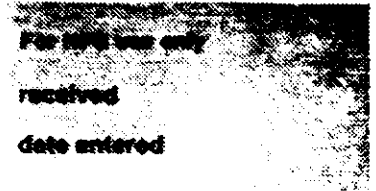
While the interior is undistinguished in detail, the original plan was noted for its role in judicial reform. According to an 1893 article:

A not more striking feature and one that will attract most wide comment is the non-provision of the throng room. Among all the many court chambers provided in this new building not one will admit of more than 100 spectators' presence. The rooms are of a uniform size of but 46 x 48 feet. This may amaze, possibly astound, a large portion of the public. It means that the day is past when those who administer justice in Chicago will take chances of having their court proceedings trifled with or in any manner affected by demonstration on the part of a great number of spectators...<sup>11</sup>

This reform was particularly significant in a courthouse on the site of the Haymarket Trial, perhaps the greatest example of how making trials a "spectator sport" compromised justice.

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Continuation sheet 4

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Notes to Significance Section 8.

1. A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago (Chicago: The A. T. Andreas Company, 1886); Edwin Rozwenc and Thomas Bender, The Making of American Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).
2. Perry Duis, "Whose City: Public and Private Places in Nineteenth Century Chicago", Chicago History, Spring 1983 vol.XII, No. 1.
3. "Citadel of Justice: A Description of the New Criminal Court Building", May 7, 1893, source unknown, files of the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks.
4. Hal Higdon, The Crime of the Century: The Leopold & Loeb Case (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975); Kevin Tierney, Darrow: A Biography (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1979).
5. Marianne Taylor, "Chicago Legend Up For Sale", Chicago Tribune, May 20, 1984, Section 3, pp. 1, 11.
6. Andreas, op. cit.; Carl Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 9; Rudolph A. Hofmeister, The Germans of Chicago (Champaign: Stipes Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 251-52; Thomas E. Tallmadge, Architecture in Old Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 97, 125; Frank A. Randall, History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 133, index; Henry R. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), p. 399.
7. Condit, op. cit., p. 23.
8. Tallmadge, op. cit., pp. 124-132; Randall, op. cit.; Inland Architect, April 1884 lists Schoenhofen Building permits that may be for Brewery buildings although no address is given.
9. Op. cit., Note 3.
10. For examples see Richard Pare, ed., Courthouse: A Photographic Document (New York: Horizon Press, 1978), pp. 165-218.
11. Op. cit., Note 3.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

**Specific dates** 1892

**Builder/Architect** Otto H. Matz, Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### Summary

The Cook County Criminal Court Building, a monumental Romanesque Revival public building, is a rare surviving work of early Chicago architect Otto H. Matz. Both the building and the site are historically significant as the location of numerous important events and trials. It qualifies, therefore, for National Register listing under Criteria "A" and "C". The longstanding association of the building and site with important trials and municipal government make it significant in the areas of law and politics/government. A rare surviving example of the commercial or public use of the Romanesque style in Chicago, and an unusual survivor of the work of Otto Matz, it is also significant in the area of architecture.

#### Explanation

##### 1. Historical Significance

Chicago's North Market Hall stood on the block where the Court Building now stands from 1851 until the Great Fire of 1871. The public market was the scene of daily commerce and of numerous public assemblies. One of the most famous gatherings was in 1854, when, after the passage of his Kansas-Nebraska Act, Senator Stephen A. Douglas tried to explain his position to a meeting called by his supporters. The hostile anti-slavery crowd refused to let him finish, instead burning him in effigy.<sup>1</sup> By the time of the Fire, the Hall (after 1866 occupied partially by a precinct police station) was the City's last public market building.<sup>2</sup>

In 1872, after the Market Hall burned in the Fire, Cook County acquired the land and constructed the first Criminal Court and County Jail building, designed by Armstrong and Egan. Among the important events in this Courthouse, which served until 1892, was the volatile Haymarket Trial and execution in 1886. On this site, eight accused anarchists were found guilty of a bombing at a protest meeting and four were hanged. The trial and execution were objects of great public interest, and spectators packed the courtroom as well as the execution, which took place in the alley between the courthouse and the jail. The four survivors were later pardoned by Governor John Peter Altgeld because they had not been given a fair trial. Altgeld, incidentally,<sup>3</sup> was a Judge prior to running for Governor, and presided in this 1872 Court Building.

In 1892 the County demolished the earlier Court Building to construct the present larger structure. Perhaps the most famous of the trials that occurred here was the Leopold and Loeb case of 1924. Notable as a sensational event which captured the recklessness of the 1920s, the case is of enduring significance because of attorney Clarence Darrow's success in sparing the two confessed murderers from the death penalty, thereby winning a major victory in the fight against capital punishment. Darrow also used the trial<sup>4</sup> to introduce the then new Freudian psychoanalytic theories into litigation.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Notes to Section 8 on continuation sheet number 4.

See also Preliminary Staff Summary and files, Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, 320 North Clark Street, Chicago 60610.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name Chicago Loop, IL

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	6	4	4	7	7	2	0	4	6	3	7	5	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Emily J. Harris, Program Director  
for

organization Landmarks Preservation Council of Ill.

date June 1984

street & number 407 South Dearborn Street

telephone (312) 922-1742

city or town Chicago

state Illinois 60605

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *David Perry*

title Director

date 9/24/84

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration